ERIC Document Resume	See Instruction Sheet	DATE OF RESUME	DATE RECEIVED

A. PUBLICATION DATA

1. ERIC NUMBER	2. ORIGINATOR CONTROL NO(S).	3. IDENTIFICATION NO.
ED001967	NA	NA

DO NOT WRITE IN SPACE BELOW

4. AUTHOR(S):
Grier, Eunice S.

5. TITLE OF DOCUMENT ABSTRACTED:
In Search of a Future

6. PUBLICATION TITLE:
NA

MICROFILM COPY AVAILABLE
YES ☒ NO ☐

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YES ☐ NO ☒

COPYRIGHT RELEASE FILED
YES ☐ NO ☐

TYPE OF REPORT
PROPOSAL ☐
IN-PROGRESS ☐
FINAL ☒
FOLLOW-UP ☐

7. EDITOR(S):
NA

8. PLACE OF ORIGIN
ORG. Washington Center for Metropolitan Studies,
ST 1726 Pennsylvania Ave.,
CITY, STATE N.W., Washington
TELE. EXT. 6, D.C.
INST/LOC CODE

9. PUBLISHER OR SOURCE
Washington Center for Metropolitan Studies
1726 Penn. Ave., N.W., Washinton 6, D.C.

OTHER ERIC REFERENCES:

ERIC SATELLITE CODE

10. VOL.	11. PAGES	12. MO./YR.	13. TOTAL PP.
NA	NA	7/63	25

B. INDEXING DATA

14. SUBJECT AREA

15. TYPE OF ENDEAVOR
report

16. INDEXING TERMS (6-12)

career opportunities	career orientation			
higher education	high schools			
guidance counseling	ability identification			
	self-concepts			

17. ABSTRACT (MAX. 250 WORDS)

Forty-six young Negro men were interviewed five years after their graduation from Washington, D.C., high schools. This group was considered capable of higher education at time of graduation. Their parents were better educated than the average Washington area Negroes.

All the young men had high aspirations for professional employment. Of the 46 graduates, 39 took some form of post-high school training. Only seven had received bachelor's degrees after five years, but 18 were still enrolled. The primary reason for leaving college was the great amount of career indecision.

Indecision resulted from a number of factors. Parents encouraged the men to attend college, but not for any specific goal. The school, in the same way, provided much more emphasis on college opportunities than on realistic career goals. Because the Negro graduate had little close contact with professional people and professional employment, he had no clear understanding of future application of his training.

There is a need for more intensive career orientation service for all youth, regardless of scholastic achievement. A re-evaluation of present counseling techniques should examine the services provided for superior students. New techniques should provide young people with creative work experiences.

However, efforts to orient youth to take utmost advantage of their abilities will have little effect if job discrimination continues at the present level.

ERIC No.

18. SOURCE OF ABSTRACT

C. FUNDING DATA

19. SUPPORTING ORGANIZATION	20. DIVISION OR DEPT.	21. CONTRACT NO. / PROJECT NO.
	22. TOTAL COST OF PROJECT	
	23. DURATION OR PROJECT	U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare Office of Education

NEGRO INCOME AND EMPLOYMENT: ECONOMIC IMPACT OF SEGREGATION

Stalvey 01

ED001967

IN SEARCH OF A FUTURE

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Office of Education-EEOP
Research and Materials Branch

WASHINGTON CENTER FOR METROPOLITAN STUDIES

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One of a series of studies made by the research staff of the Washington Center for Metropolitan Studies. This pamphlet is an interpretive version of the full research report, which includes a description of methodology and tabular data. The full report is available for $3.00.

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IN SEARCH OF A FUTURE

A Pilot Study of Career-Seeking Experiences of

Selected High School Graduates in Washington, D.C.

EUNICE S. GRIER, *Staff Associate*

Washington Center for Metropolitan Studies

Office of Education-EEOP

Research and Materials Branch

FOREWORD

The Human Resources Program of the Washington Center for Metropolitan Studies was conceived in 1960 as one of research and education at the threshold of action. Each study undertaken is intended to illuminate an important facet of the utilization or underutilization of human resources in the metropolitan setting in such a way that community leaders will define the problem accurately, recognize its relationship to the complex of problems, and initiate programs which will deal fundamentally rather than superficially with the question at hand.

Mrs. Eunice Grier's study, exploring the career-seeking experiences of a group of male high school graduates in five post-high school years, throws important light on the difficulties these young men encountered in their search for a satisfying occupation, and makes recommendations which should be carefully considered by responsible leadership.

To act as a catalytic agent in bringing about desirable changes, the Commission on Human Resources was created in 1961. It is a constituent agency of the Washington Center for Metropolitan Studies consisting of twenty-two representative citizens of the District of Columbia and adjacent areas in Maryland and Virginia.

The Commission was formed in the realization that more than ever before economic growth and community well-being depend on the development of human resources—through such means as education, training, guidance, broadened employment opportunities, and improved housing and health—and in the belief that the future belongs to those communities which make the maximum investment in people.

Another important activity of the Center's Human Resources Program is a lecture series in which outstanding scholars and specialists visit the Center as consultants and lecturers.

Further details of this research and education program may be obtained from Mrs. Kathryn H. Stone, Director, Human Resources Program, Washington Center for Metropolitan Studies, 1726 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C.

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IN SEARCH OF A FUTURE

Background and Objectives

THIS STUDY OF CAREER-SEEKING EXPERIENCES of selected Negro high school graduates in Washington, D.C. was undertaken by the Washington Center for Metropolitan Studies in an effort to provide knowledge helpful in solving one of the most critical problems facing urban America today.

At this crucial period in its history, America is becoming aware that its survival both as a world power and as a viable social and economic system may depend on the effectiveness with which it utilizes the human potential of all its citizens. Technological advance, essential to maintaining our international position, has created a growing mismatch between labor supply and job needs. Some skills are in critically short supply, and the shortages hamper further progress. At the same time, the economy has increasing difficulty utilizing persons with other skills, or with no skills at all. The resulting "hard-core" unemployment menaces the nation's economic stability, at the same time as it brings hardship to the families directly involved.

The handicaps of inadequate educational preparation and restricted job opportunity, moreover, fall disproportionately upon certain groups in America's population. One of the most important of these groups is Negroes. And since they are concentrated overwhelmingly in certain geographic locations, the obstacles which hinder them tend to become burdens upon entire localities.

Particularly hard hit are the central cities of our major metropolitan areas where Negroes constitute an ever-larger proportion of the total; yet their political boundaries are usually static. As a result, the core municipalities of the metropolis encounter increasing difficulty in coping with the inevitable concomitants of Negroes' disadvantaged status: economic deprivation; problems of family life,

children and youth; neighborhood deterioration; and growing political unrest. They must meet burgeoning human problems with declining resources.

In metropolitan Washington these problems are seen in particularly sharp contrast. Here, overall levels of education, occupation and income are among the highest in the nation; and yet shortages of certain key skills are already apparent and threaten to become more serious in the decade ahead. At the same time, a substantial fraction of the area's people, and especially of its Negro residents, lack the educational preparation necessary to take advantage of many of the job openings now going begging.

Overall unemployment is presently low in the National Capital Area; nonetheless, jobless rates are distressingly high among certain groups. At the time of the 1960 Census, for example, Negro males were unemployed over two and a half times as often as white males. Among Negro male youth under 20, over one-fifth were looking for work. Under-employment is a frequent problem as well. Family incomes among Negroes are substantially lower overall than those for whites, and at equivalent educational levels Negro workers usually earn less than their white counterparts.

With 85 percent of all Negroes in the metropolitan area residing within the District of Columbia, and the District's residents now well over half Negro, the City of Washington bears the brunt of the manifold and accumulated disadvantages of the metropolitan area's Negro population.

Further, the present situation holds sobering portents. For over 200,000 of the nearly half-million Negro residents of the metropolitan area in 1960 were under 21 years old. Most of these children and youth will enter the adult world of work and family responsibility in the next two decades.

In whatever context one views the problem—whether for the nation as a whole, for the 212 metropolitan areas where over two-thirds of America's population now resides, or for Metropolitan Washington which is the nation's administrative heart and its principal showplace for the world—it becomes apparent that the full utilization of the potential contributions of youth is essential to continued social and economic health. It was with these matters in mind that the Washington Center, through its Commission on Human Resources, undertook the present study.

If America is to solve this problem, three critical areas demand attention. One is the educational system, which must prepare youth adequately and realistically for the responsibilities of a changing world. The second is the employment market; employers must recognize and anticipate their personnel needs, and must be ready and willing to take full advantage of the skills of all citizens in order to fill these needs.

The third area is the process of transition from schooling to ultimate career—a process which is largely accomplished, in our society, during the period of roughly a half dozen years between the time a youth leaves high school and the time he settles down finally to the general type of job he will probably pursue for the remainder of his working life. The study reported here focusses particularly upon this critical transition period.

For youth this is a time of testing and being tested, of exploring, of trial and often of error. No matter how adequate his educational preparation may be, no matter how bright the opportunities which beckon, this period will be instrumental in determining how well a youth makes use of his talents toward the betterment of himself and the nation in which he lives.

During this phase some young people go on to post-high school education; and with more or less sureness of aim they select from the wide range of educational fields the one to which they feel themselves best suited by ability and preference. Others, unequipped to pursue further training by financial resources, scholastic aptitude, or interest, make their choice from among those starting jobs available to persons with no preparation beyond high school.

In few if any stages of life are the decisions which must be faced more crucial. Yet little precise information is available about the events of this period of trial and their impact upon the individual. This, then, is a pilot study aimed at overcoming a few of the factual limitations to more effective action on problems confronting youth during the transition from school to career. It is an examination in some depth of the experiences of a selected group of Negro high school graduates in the District of Columbia during the five years immediately following their graduation.

In light of limited immediate resources and the general paucity of information on the subject, the study was viewed as an attempt to identify problems for further examination and experimental action—not as a definitive effort intended to produce final recommendations. Its general focus was upon the factors which might be impeding the ultimate achievement of such young people's full human potential. Two general kinds of obstacles were posed for examination: those which might exist in the job situation, and those which might reside in the youth themselves or in their background of experience in home, school and community.

The Youth Studied

The youth whose experiences we examined included all male graduates of the class of 1956 from one District of Columbia high school who could be located five years after their graduation. There were

46 young men in the sample, of whom 39 were reached for personal interviews in considerable depth; seven more were contacted by mail. In addition to data on experience following graduation, the interviews sought considerable information on home and school background, initial aspirations, and present outlook.

The five-year interval permitted a substantial time lapse in which the graduates had opportunity for experience in job seeking or post-high school training. At the same time, it allowed study of a group of graduates still reasonably contemporary with young people completing high school today, and who faced fairly comparable conditions in their efforts to find productive places in the adult world of work. The sample was limited to male graduates because of the traditional position of the male as the principal breadwinner in the American family.

It was also limited to youth who had attended a school whose coursework and orientation was aimed largely at preparation for college and whose student body was generally believed capable of pursuing education beyond the high school level. Graduates of this school were used to minimize the chance that any problems they encountered in seeking careers would be due to serious limitations in ability and interest.

There was no way of comparing this group with the general run of white or Negro graduates from District of Columbia high schools; when they were graduated, no standardized system-wide achievement testing existed in the District schools. It is, however, probably safe to characterize them as an above-average group of young men, though not one of blue ribbon calibre. The male graduates of this class had generally lagged behind their female classmates in academic achievement; most had attained average grade records, but this performance was in the context of a school with higher-than-average expectations for its students.

Almost all were natives of the District of Columbia; even among the handful who had been born elsewhere, most had come to Washington at an early age and had received all of their formal education in District public schools.

The Family Situation

At the time they were interviewed for this study, five years after graduation from high school, the majority of the young men were unmarried and were still living at home with their parents. Their parents were better educated than the average of Washington area Negroes, for whom the median in 1960 was less than ten years of schooling. Only about ten percent reported that neither parent had graduated from high school, and almost half of the young men had

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July 1963

price 50 cents

at least one parent with some college training.

Most of the youth had grown up in stable, two-parent families, although there was a sizeable minority from broken households. In the latter cases it was usually the father who was missing from the family. A majority of the households were small or moderate in size.

The occupations of both fathers and mothers ranged from professional to unskilled laborer or service worker. Only a small minority of the parents were professionally-employed, and almost all of these were school teachers. Most of the professionals, moreover, were mothers rather than fathers. This meant that only a few of the youth had a professionally-employed parent of the same sex. Close to half of the fathers were engaged in semi-skilled or unskilled laboring or service jobs; almost the same proportion of mothers were service workers. Generally, however, parents' employment appeared to be steady, rather than on-and-off, by-the-day work.

On the basis of their parents' occupations and also the appearance of their homes, most of these youth seem to have come from families where incomes and living standards were modest. They were not slum dwellers from seriously deprived backgrounds; but neither were many of them well-to-do.

From the relatively high educational level achieved by the parents, it might be anticipated that they would have high hopes for their children's future. On the other hand, many of the parents might have difficulty in aiding their children financially during college; and also in providing them with concrete advice about the rewards, prerequisites and demands of the professional careers toward which most were taking the first step by attending an academic high school. That these things were generally the case, we shall see shortly.

Initial Aspirations

The youth themselves almost uniformly held high aspirations. At the time of their graduation, virtually all of them wished for a career in one of the professions. Even among those with no clearly formulated career goals, professional occupations were usually viewed as desirable; and they considered possibilities chiefly within this range.

Many of those concerned with the advancement of minority youth believe that one of their chief obstacles is predominantly low aspirations, aspirations presumably kept low by long acclimatization to the barriers of discrimination. Negro youth do not achieve much, it is held, partly because they do not aim very high. Several careful studies in recent years, however, have placed this assumption in question.* Our study found no evidence in conflict with such studies. Whatever

*For example, see ANTONOVSKY, A. and LERNER, M. J., "Negro and White Youth in Elmira." Chapter in *Discrimination and Low Incomes,* edited by A. ANTONOVSKY and L. LORWIN. (New York: State Commission Against Discrimination.

difficulty the youth in our sample may have subsequently experienced in their search for careers was *not* due to initially low aspirations.

Pursuit of Further Training

In line with their attendance at an academic high school and their ambitions for personal attainment, few of the young men stopped with a high school diploma. Of the 46 graduates, 39 took some form of post-high school training. Thirty-two entered colleges with degree-granting powers, and seven more attended schools for specialized technical training. Only seven took no post-high school training at all. So far, then, it would appear that most of the youth not only had high ambitions but were launched upon the path to fulfillment after leaving high school.

Five years later, most of the young men still possessed high aims, but comparatively few were very far along toward achievement. Furthermore, many had altered their specific career goals one or more times.

Of the seven who had entered schools for specialized technical skills, five were now employed in occupations directly related to their training. For the college-bound, however, the picture was quite different. Among the 32 who had entered degree-granting institutions, only seven had actually received bachelor's degrees.

Most of the rest had interrupted their studies at least once, and often twice or more. Very few of these, however, appeared to be permanent "college dropouts." Of the 25 young men who had some college, but had not yet been graduated when they were interviewed for this study, 18 were presently enrolled. Four more said that they expected to register for the semester coming up shortly. For only three did the likelihood of completing college seem extremely slim at the time this study was made.

Reasons for Interruption

Precisely why these young men had interrupted their college careers was not entirely clear in all cases, and a number of the respondents appeared unable to report their own motivations with any great degree of clarity. Undoubtedly the reasons were seldom simple, and it is probably safe to state that there was often more than one contributing factor.

Difficulty with the pace of college coursework apparently played a role for some. Three of the youth reported that they had been suspended or expelled from college because of failing academic

1958.) See also, LEWIS, HYLAN, *Child Rearing Among Low-Income Families.* (Washington, D.C.: Washington Center for Metropolitan Studies. 1961.)

grades; all three had been reinstated, however, and were continuing their studies when they were interviewed.

Several of the dropouts indicated that they had done so in order to earn additional money which they needed to continue in college. Probing, however, suggested that the definition of inadequate funds ranged widely—from lack of money to cover the essentials of tuition and boarding expenses (obviously a severe need in a few cases), to funds adequate not only for academic requirements but also for such material acquisitions as cars and for the social events that are part of most campus life. Financial burdens due to early marriage apparently had little effect on progress in college, however; relatively few had married, and among these most had persisted in their studies.

The "Floundering" Phenomenon

The most frequent explanation given by students for leaving college was the presence of nagging questions in their own minds about the wisdom of the course they were following. Many stated, with varying phrasings, that they had become unsure of what they really wanted to do with their lives, and decided to drop out of college in order to have time to think more about their futures and about their ability and willingness to undertake the necessary preparations for professional careers.

One young man said: "I guess I wasn't ready for it [college]." Another stated that he "needed a break in school." A number of the respondents indicated that they had revised their career decisions after a period of searching self-evaluation.

Here, of course, we are dealing both with recollections of past events not easily verified and with a problem area which is highly subjective and emotion-laden. Nonetheless, the general validity of this explanation seems supported both by data on changes in career aspirations and major coursework, and by the frequency with which the young men later returned to college.

The desire for a career at the professional level was not lost by most, but the initial choice of a career often wavered and the students frequently underwent a period of great uncertainty and "floundering," during which many decided to drop out of college until their doubts were resolved.

Five years after graduation, when they were contacted for this study, most of the youth still wished to enter a profession. Only ten persons or about one-fourth of the total, however, had maintained their original choices.

Although no single career had stood out as the prime favorite at the time of their high school graduation, engineering or one of the physical sciences was reported as the choice of nine of the

graduates. Five more said they had chosen medicine, and six said they had wished to be school teachers. Only four of the young men said they had been undecided about their careers.

By the time this study was made the emphasis had shifted substantially away from engineering, the physical sciences, teaching and medicine. There were now only two aspiring engineers, one chemist, two teachers, and two doctors in the group. Interest in the social sciences and in the arts had picked up considerably.

Perhaps more significant, the number of respondents who indicated themselves as "undecided" about their future careers had doubled from four to eight. Asked what kind of work they expected to be doing ten years hence, these young men either replied that they did not know, or listed a range of possibilities so broad that it was obvious they had not narrowed their choices even to a general area of interest. The "undecideds" included not only some of those who had dropped out of college, but at least one respondent who had actually received a degree and was now in graduate school. The following is excerpted from the interviewer's record on this young man:

> Mr. C_____ was graduated from college in 1960 with a degree in physical education. He is currently working for his master's degree in education because he feels it will benefit his chances of employment in the future. Ten years from now Mr. C_____ hopes to be a practicing physician or in medical school. His plans for the immediate future are rather vague although he is contemplating entering the Service in June, 1962. He would like to join the aquatic division and possibly become a frogman. If he likes it, he will remain in the Service; if he does not, he will attempt either to enter medical school or to pursue a career in some phase of physical education.

And from other interview notes:

> I asked Mr. L_____ what he expects to be doing in another ten years. "That depends on the Army," he said. "I might go to school. If I found an electronics school near my Army base I would apply for entrance. Of course, the Army might put me in kitchen work because of my job experience [restaurant work] . . . Or, I might still be with the restaurant I'm working for now in another ten years. Or, I might get a job in government."

> After one semester in college, Mr. A_____ changed his major from physical education to foreign relations. Asked why he made this change, he replied: "Well, I want to travel, and I like politics, and I am very fond of Oriental people." He said that his minister was interested in foreign relations and had done a great deal of traveling. Mr. A_____ said that he guessed he would continue with foreign relations when he returns to college next year, but added, "I may switch to sociology.". . . Ten years from now, Mr. A_____ hopes to have his master's degree and to have a much better job than his present one.

The phenomenon described as "floundering" is known to be quite frequent among young people and particularly young males, as they struggle to grow out of adolescence and into adulthood. It is a period often fraught with uncertainties and with frequent changes of mind. Given the limitations of this present exploration as a pilot survey, we are hard put, nevertheless, to explain the unusually high degree of "floundering" which our group appeared to display, and the unusually high degree of persistence toward college which they apparently maintained in spite of interruptions. Some insight may be gained, however, from looking at the sources and kinds of career guidance which these young men received and their interpretation of this guidance.

Sources of Career Guidance: Family and Friends

Just as many of their aspirations appeared basically to be of a rather generalized nature—to enter a profession and achieve a high station in life—so also may have been much of the stimulation and encouragement which the youth received in their search for satisfying careers. Students were urged to aspire high, but recalled receiving little advice about what this injunction meant in concrete terms.

Most parents, for example, evidently wanted their sons to attend college and supported them both psychologically and, to the extent of their limited ability to do so, financially as well. But, according to the students' recollections of their parents' attitudes, "going to college" was the goal, rather than the undertaking of specific occupations. Probably more important, the family circle did not provide much advice about the rewards and requirements of specific occupations, let alone exert pressure to make a particular career choice. One respondent summed it up this way:

> I never felt any pressure from my parents in any specific direction except they expected I would attend college.

And others reported:

> My parents were always interested in my school experiences, and they talked to me about my school work and my future ambitions. They said they wanted me to go to college and to be successful in whatever I decided to do. But the specific career choice was to be mine.
>
> My parents wanted me to go on to college although neither of them completed high school. They did try to discourage me somewhat from taking an engineering course. They suggested that a liberal arts course, like economics, would require less studying. But there was never any question about their wanting me to go to college.
>
> I knew my parents expected me to attend college and enter a profession.

My mother was more concerned about my getting a college education than about a particular field. My father did not push me toward a particular field, but emphasized the importance of a college education.

The only thing I'm sure of now is that I will continue my education because this is necessary for Negroes to compete successfully. My parents have impressed this fact upon their children and are committed to helping their children get a good education.

The last of these quotes may be particularly indicative. Of course, we are dealing here with the youths' interpretations of their parents' wishes as revealed in behavior recalled after the fact. Both memory and perception of another's motives intervene. While some caution is required for this reason, the strong thread of similarity among the responses gives some reason for believing that our data are meaningful. At the least, they probably yield a fairly accurate picture of the manner in which *the graduates viewed their parents' desires for them* at the time they were trying to arrive at career choices.

It would appear that parents urged further learning upon their children primarily as a means toward a general end: "success" in an occupation yielding both status and financial security. A college degree was viewed as a key to this success. But the choice of a particular occupation, with all that this choice involved in the way of specific educational preparation, was left largely to the youth himself.

There was, of course, the graduate whose parents tried to discourage him somewhat from pursuing engineering. Another, who aspired to a career in drama, reported being warned by his parents about its uncertain financial rewards. On the minority of occasions when parents (usually the mother) apparently expressed a positive preference for one career over others, it was usually for professions such as medicine and education which have traditionally been open to Negroes in the Washington area.

At this point it may be worthwhile to recall that, while the educational levels of the parents were considerably higher than for most Washington Negroes, only a small fraction were actually employed in a profession. In all, there were only 12 professionally-employed persons among all the parents of the graduates under study. Only four fathers were professionals, compared to eight mothers; since all the respondents were male, this fact means that only about one-tenth had a professionally-employed parent of the same sex.

The range of professions at which the parents worked, moreover, was very limited. Most were teachers, one of the very few professional level jobs freely open to Negroes a generation ago. This might tend to limit parents' comprehension of the demands of other professions, but would not necessarily reduce these professions in their esteem. Thus, they might try to orient their children to a generalized desire to pursue a profession; but they would not, in many cases, be

well equipped to give their children concrete advice on the wide variety of professions available.

The same factors which limited parents' experience would also tend to operate on most of the adults with whom these youths would normally come into close contact. For this reason, few would have available among their adult acquaintances a wide range of career models against which they could match their own predispositions.

Sources of Career Guidance: The School

By their own account, the graduates were also strongly motivated toward higher education and professional careers by the high school which they attended. At that time, the school offered only an academic course, and the implication strongly received from teachers and others was that graduates should and would go on to college. One respondent told the interviewer: "The school constantly made students aware of the achievements of its college-trained alumni, and instilled in the students the feeling that they were expected to do likewise." Another graduate said: "The high school teachers encouraged students to prepare themselves for further education." Still another respondent recalled that he "was encouraged both at home and at school to attend college."

Many of the graduates undoubtedly were already motivated toward college when they elected to attend an academic high school. Nevertheless, there seems little question that both the history of the school's earlier graduates and the interest of the faculty could serve only to keep these motivations alive.

A review of various mimeographed materials distributed to the student body by the counseling staff during the period when these youth were in attendance reveals a strong emphasis on motivation toward college, and on preparation for college admission. "Counseling Newsletters," for example, contained admonitions to apply early; detailed information about entrance examinations and scholarship opportunities; and announcements of special coaching classes for College Board exams. Listings of guidance materials which students were urged to read were also long on college orientation.

Our sample of graduates recalled a variety of techniques employed by the school to expose students to concrete knowledge of various professions and to orient them in light of their own aptitudes. One device mentioned by a number of respondents, and which evidently left a deep impression on some, was the "career day" assemblies at which talks were given by persons who had achieved success in specific occupations. A few of the graduates recalled speakers whose careers resembled their own aspirations, either initially or at present. One aspiring engineer, for example, remembered hearing a professor

of engineering from a local university: "I was very much impressed by the man, and decided that this would be a good career for me." Another, with ambitions to enter law, remembered "a middle-aged woman lawyer who spoke to the students."

The young men also recalled a variety of techniques used by the school to help the student recognize his own abilities and preferences. One of these was the administration of aptitude tests; the results of these tests were then discussed with the students. The school counseling office, some recalled, also provided numerous books and pamphlets on career choices and college requirements. One respondent said that the guidance counselors tried to locate part-time and summer employment for students going on to college, but that this endeavor "was usually not productive because of the dearth of such jobs."

We must await, of course, a systematic evaluation of the effectiveness of various counseling procedures both in high school and elsewhere. Some new techniques have been added to the career guidance arsenal since these young men left high school. In addition, some counseling undoubtedly took place which was not identified as such by the students.

In light of the actual post-graduation experience of the persons interviewed, however, it seems a fair statement that for these youth at least the counseling procedures were successful only to a very limited degree in producing a realistic orientation toward their life's work. This statement does not reflect in any way upon the efforts of counseling personnel in the context in which they were required to work. In the absence of strong and effective supportive efforts by both home and other community resources, the school had unusually stringent demands placed upon it to make up the deficit.

Role Models

Another source of inspiration and incentive toward specific careers, and perhaps the most influential, was a "role model" whom the youth wished to emulate. Seventeen of the graduates said that they had been influenced by such a model in their choice of career. In most cases, the model was someone they knew well, such as a relative, a family friend, or a teacher.

One young man, for example, said that he had been influenced to enter dental school by his own dentist. Another, aspiring to a medical career, said that one of his uncles is a physician, and he has observed that medicine is "a lucrative occupation." And two other respondents pointed to teachers who had been sources of inspiration to them. One youth, who now wishes to become a high school physical education teacher and coach, expressed great admiration for one of the coaches

at the college he attended; the other decided to pursue a career in drama because of the example of the faculty advisor of the high school dramatic club.

Still another graduate, whose early ambition was to be a teacher, said that he now hopes to follow the example of James Baldwin, whose works he has read with great interest. While he still anticipates doing some teaching, he hopes to find a job in Africa which will provide him with an income and will also enable him to "explore the myth that is the Negro." Such an experience, he said, would enable him "to sense and feel new things so that I can speak as a Negro, not just to Negroes, but to the whole world."

Several persons have hopes of going their model one better. One respondent, for example, attributed his interest in social work to his mother's volunteer activities as sponsor of a home for dependent children. Another, whose brickmason father built the family home himself, is currently studying to be an architect.

On-the-Job Experiences as Guides to Careers

The analysis also included the question of how much career guidance was obtained from on-the-job experiences. For six of the informants, such experience was clearly decisive; these six reported that they had arrived at their present career choice as a result of job experience in similar situations. For five out of the six, this experience was gained while in military service.

One young man, who had been given teaching assignments in his Army reserve unit, has decided to combine teaching with his earlier interest in science and to become a science teacher. Another has decided to study foreign languages, with the aim of becoming an interpreter, as a result of a two-year sojourn with the Army in Germany. While abroad, he learned to read and speak German quite fluently and decided to continue his study, adding other languages to his repertoire. Two other young men attended special Army schools for training as electronics technicians and are now employed in similar capacities in civilian agencies; eventually, both would like to get degrees in engineering. The fifth respondent with military experience was trained by the Army as a teletype operator; he would like to continue in this occupation, but has been unable to find a similar job as a civilian.

Outside of military service only one of the interviewees reported that a job experience was of any use in helping him decide on a career. Although he was wavering at the time of interview, he was considering switching his college major to sociology as a result of a highly satisfying work experience with mentally retarded children.

For many of the graduates, however, neither personal experience

nor the experience of others whom they knew well had been adequate and varied enough to provide sufficient guidance to the choice of a satisfying field of work. A number of those who had found such first- or second-hand experience valuable in their decisions had done so only after a lengthy period of uncertainty or wasted effort.

With these facts in mind, it may be well to look at the employment history of this group since leaving high school.

Post-High School Employment

All but one of the 46 young men in our sample had had some work experience following high school graduation. At the time they were contacted for this study, most were gainfully employed. Twenty-five were working full-time, and ten more were employed either in part-time or summer jobs. Eight were unemployed, however, and all but one of these were actively looking for work. The unemployed amounted to 18 percent of the total sample, a surprisingly high proportion for an area which has an unemployment rate substantially below that for the nation as a whole. And these were not dropouts but high school graduates, most of whom had some college training as well.

Of the 25 who had full-time jobs, only three were working in positions closely related to their present career aspirations. One was a commercial artist, and two were the electronics technicians mentioned earlier. The rest viewed themselves as merely marking time until they were able to fulfill their true ambitions. This was five years after their graduation from high school, when they had reached a median age of 23 years.

Since their graduation from high school, the young men had held among them a total of 56 full-time jobs. While some of these jobs were used chiefly as a means for building up cash reserves for college expenses, they were neither part-time nor temporary in nature. Most of these full-time jobs fell into two broad occupational categories: clerical and service. Almost all of the 24 clerical positions were in governmental agencies; and they were heavily concentrated in the U. S. Postal Service. Nineteen of the full-time jobs were in service occupations, most being distinctly menial in character. For example, five of the jobs were as dishwashers, four as porters, and three as bus boys. One of the youths had worked as an unskilled laborer, and four as cab drivers or parking lot attendants.

The median income reported for these full-time jobs was about $70 weekly. The high was $100, and the low was $25. Had not a substantial proportion of the positions been with the Federal government, the average would have been much lower. Most of the service jobs paid $1.00 per hour, and some even less.

The part-time and summer jobs, which had been taken mostly with an aim to obtaining funds for college, were about on a par with the full-time jobs, except that fewer of them were with government.

Many of the jobs, whether full-time, part-time or temporary, provided little in the way of useful experience which could be applied to later career opportunities. Nor were they useful in exposing these youth to the wide variety of occupations and fields of work which are available. Furthermore, the pay was generally low in accord with the low-skilled nature of the work; after deducting living costs, it is doubtful that many of the youth were able to build up any sizeable bankroll against college expenses.

Channels to Employment

The young men were asked how they had obtained each of the jobs they had held. The findings in this respect may also be indicative. Overall, by far the most important source of referrals was a relative or friend, usually a person who worked for the same employer or was a personal friend of the employer. Almost half the jobs were found in this way. Eleven of the jobs were obtained by a door-to-door canvass of employers believed to have openings. Civil Service examinations were an important route to jobs in the Federal government. Newspaper ads led to only seven jobs; private employment agencies provided only five; and the United States Employment Service only two.

It is well known that personal contacts furnished by relatives or friends are one of the most frequent sources of job opportunities for the population as a whole. Nevertheless, the heavy reliance upon relatives and friends among these youth meant, of course, referrals predominantly by persons who themselves were Negro. Many of them were of an older generation. To the extent that those who made the referrals had themselves been restricted in their job advancement as a result of direct discrimination or of inadequate educational preparation, their own disadvantages would tend to be reflected in the opportunities of the youth they advised. In this way, of course, past discrimination may have cast its shadow on the present generation.

Yet the results of the study do not support the conclusion that carryover of past disadvantages was *all* that operated to hamper these youth in achieving their full potential. There is some evidence also from the interviews that a number of the youth deliberately avoided employers whose hiring policy toward Negroes was not known to them. To some degree they may have been restricting their own horizons in an effort to avoid the humiliation of a racial rebuff.

A number of the young men, however, did not restrict their job explorations in this way, and their overall employment pattern did

not differ significantly from the rest. Experiences directly indicative of discrimination were relatively infrequent in the recollections of the graduates interviewed; rarely did they recall race being mentioned as the reason for rejection, although there were many refusals. Nonetheless, the overall pattern of employment experience for this group of above-average high school graduates is suggestive of strong restrictions upon job opportunities: restrictions both of level and of range. Only through operation of discriminatory barriers, however covert and subtle, can their limited job achievement logically be explained.

Recommended Research and Action

This study has raised many more questions than it was able to answer definitively. Some of them suggest the need for further research of more comprehensive and more specific kinds. Others should be probed through experimental demonstration programs, accompanied by careful evaluation procedures to determine the utility of the techniques under trial.

This presentation will be confined to outlining a few specific areas of inquiry which appear most likely at this time to produce results in improved utilization of young people's talents—not in the indefinite future but almost immediately.

It should be noted at the outset that when we refer to counseling or career orientation in the recommendations which follow, we do not intend the implication that this process is the exclusive responsibility of the schools. Preparation and orientation toward the adult world of work begin almost from the time a child is born, and occur unconsciously as well as consciously. What is fed into the process by the home environment and by community institutions is at least as important as the formal efforts of the school; in many cases even more important. Nor should "school" be read simply as "high school." The process of career guidance should be taking place at the college level as well as in the early school years. It should continue when the youth takes his first steps into the world of work.

Guiding youth forward to suitable and satisfying work is, in our opinion, a task with many facets which together can accomplish the goal. There must be community-wide awareness and concerted action by all segments of the community.

RECOMMENDATION #1: *More intensive career orientation services to all youth, regardless of scholastic achievement and apparent ability.*

Despite ability levels which appear above average, the youth studied here had great difficulty in attaining a realistic and consistent orientation toward ultimate career goals. They experienced a great deal of

floundering and indecision, especially during the early college years.

At least in part, this waste of effort and time might well have been lessened had more resources been available to assist them in understanding the requirements of various careers. Their school probably provided more counseling services than many high schools. Yet especially in light of the parents' inability to function as advisers, the resources of the school were insufficient. On the other hand, it is undoubtedly true that few if any schools provide enough aid along this line.

It is a fairly common observation, which was echoed in the comments of some of our interviewees, that the highly gifted students and those with special problems tend to receive more attention in school and elsewhere than do the far larger numbers of generally capable but less conspicuous youth. Severe limitations of staff and budget would almost assuredly tend to produce this result.

If this common observation is true, it may mean that the United States is giving short shrift to a large and important reservoir of talent. There is no reason to believe that the "average" student requires any less help in finding a satisfying career than does his brother at either end of the ability spectrum. In addition, the number of youth whose academic performance is adequate or merely better-than-average is much larger than those who attain the highest scholastic honors, and there is no reason to assume that such youth are not capable of making important contributions to society. Many of our national leaders today garnered few "A" grades in high school and college.

If this recommendation is to be carried out, it obviously calls for far larger amounts of funds and personnel than our nation has been willing to expend to date on career guidance. Since much of the huge investment involved in educating a youth from kindergarten through high school or college may be wasted if he fails to find the career which best suits his ability and preferences, money saved on guidance may be poor "economy" indeed.

RECOMMENDATION #2: *Comprehensive re-evaluation of present techniques for career counseling and job placement.*

It is a fact of considerable significance that we know very little about the effectiveness of present procedures in producing realistic career orientation and in placing youth in jobs which are both satisfying to them and maximally beneficial to the society. The findings of the present study, though limited to a special group and not specifically directed to the efficiency of these procedures *per se,* suggest that a critical re-examination is in order.

This evaluation should involve not only a thorough assessment of the general effectiveness of present techniques, but should look also

at the degree to which these procedures are suited to the specific needs of the different sub-groups of youth in our society: males and females; high, average and low achievers; youngsters from above-average, average and below-average socio-economic background; youth from the dominant white majority, from foreign-language households, and of nonwhite parentage; and so forth.

Our study suggests that the needs of these groups may be quite different. Probably one of its most important findings is a strong indication that Negroes' difficulties in locating suitable careers are not limited to the unschooled, the low achievers, and the high school dropouts. Youth of superior ability and high motivation, coming usually from stable family backgrounds, faced many problems.

In part their difficulties appeared to result from the limited occupational achievements of parents and adult acquaintances, which kept the youth from obtaining information about a range of careers from people they knew and trusted. In addition, the limited range of temporary and part-time jobs they held restricted the experience which they could get on their own. Such handicaps should certainly be taken into account in the availability of career aids; Negro youth, already disadvantaged in the labor market, can ill afford to be sidetracked by inadequate or misleading advice.

The evaluation should include not only the formal procedures carried out by counseling and job placement services—but the total structure of occupational information and guidance provided by school, home, employers, and the general community. It should relate these to the changing structure of the job supply. Its aim should be to develop recommendations for a total range of services adequate to reduce to an absolute minimum the wastage presently occurring in the allocation of human resources.

RECOMMENDATION #3: *Experimentation with new techniques to provide young people with creative trial work experiences.*

Our findings in this study suggest that the best advice regarding choice of occupation and field of work may be far less adequate than experience gained at first-hand. Further, even information gained from someone he knows well may be of more value to a young person than abstract counseling from someone only distantly related to his own personal situation.

The utility of military service which provided specific job exposure was noted in the career choices of five of the youth in this study. Only one other person in our total sample said that he had received aid in his career decision from on-the-job experience. This is not surprising considering the kinds of jobs the graduates were able to obtain outside the armed forces.

It is also worth noting that about two out of five graduates reported

being influenced in their career choice by a "role model" who held a similar job, usually someone close to them. Because of the restricted range of opportunities available to most of their family and friends as a result of past job discrimination, however, many others were unable to follow this kind of example in arriving at a satisfying career choice.

These findings suggest the need for systematic experimental programs which would aim both to improve the accuracy and to increase the range of information available to youth regarding occupations and fields of work.

Such experimental programs should involve parents as well as youth in order to communicate to the adults the objectives of the program and its importance to their children's future. This might be done through special orientation sessions for parents which would enable them to provide their youth with the right kinds of reinforcement and encouragement in career guidance.

These experimental programs should also be accompanied by careful observation and evaluation to assess their value and to strengthen the procedures employed. In any experiment, it is almost inevitable that there will be some problems and disappointments. Only through objective monitoring can the real significance of these difficulties be assessed and the most appropriate remedies sought.

Two possible demonstration programs come to mind, among others. The first is a community-wide program to provide on a *systematic* basis for "trial run" work experiences in a range of actual employment situations. The trial work might take place during summer vacations from high school and college, during Christmas and spring holidays, or on a part-time basis while school is in session.

Such a program might be considered a logical expansion of the distributive-education concept; but its principal goal would be exposure to varied job situations for familiarization purposes, rather than actual training in the jobs themselves. Some training would, of course, take place, but this would be a secondary aim of the program.

To be maximally effective, the program should be coupled with extensive procedures for testing and counseling the youth participants. Their on-the-job experiences should be keyed to their aptitudes and interests as demonstrated in test performance. In addition, a program of counseling would enable the youth to discuss their work experiences with knowledgeable persons who can help them to evaluate these specific experiences and to relate them to other types of employment opportunities.

Such a program would, of course, require the cooperation of a considerable number of public-spirited employers, and should be coordinated through a central placement office. It would undoubtedly require subsidization by foundation or government funds. While the program would be directed to the needs of the youth themselves, it

is quite possible that employers would themselves benefit by their exposure to a number of promising young persons who might subsequently become valued assets to their organizations.

A second possible demonstration is the creation of a "Youth Discovery Center"* which would provide young people with the opportunity to experiment with a variety of activities in a setting which is neighborhood-centered and primarily recreational in tone.

The Center would be provided with many kinds of equipment which would enable youth to explore their own inclinations on a more-or-less random basis. For example, there might be an "electronics shop" containing ham radio equipment, parts and tools for construction of simple electronic gear, and so forth. Another section might be a "kitchen corner", providing opportunity for experimentation and elementary learning in cookery and bakery skills. Still another might be a "press room," containing typewriters, a mimeograph machine, and other equipment for youngsters with interest in the printed word. Some other possibilities are a photo dark room, an auto repair and "customizing" shop, and room for experimentation in art and dramatics.

The principal aim of the "Youth Discovery Center" would be to provide young people with a variety of opportunities to develop, clarify and focus career preferences. The facilities provided would, of course, be keyed to those skills which are expected to be in continued and increasing demand in the job market; and the equipment would be of sufficiently up-to-date design to provide realistic experiences. Such equipment need not usually be expensive, however. Used or overstocked electronic parts and components are available at low prices; surplus food might be obtained free or at very low cost from Federal supplies. Many items of equipment might be obtained through donation from interested businessmen.

Each facility would be manned by persons who are not only experienced in its use but are also trained to observe the competencies of the youth and to provide them with realistic and sympathetic advice. One valuable source of manpower for these purposes might be retirees or workers who are willing to devote a few hours of time in the evening.

An essential element in the concept of such a "Center" is a maximum of freedom. Youth would neither be expected to attend on a regular basis, nor forced to spend time in sections which did not

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*The concept of the "Youth Discovery Center" has been explored by Mrs. Kathryn Stone and Mr. Frederick Gutheim, of the Washington Center for [illegible]politan Studies, in a series of staff memoranda and discussions with both public and private groups. It is presented here not as a new idea but as one which our findings suggest merits implementation. A mimeographed description of this proposed program is available from the Washington Center upon request.

interest them, nor required to complete projects in which they had lost interest. The Center should preferably be open long into the night, seven days a week.

Every effort would be made to promote the concept of work as a potentially satisfying and fulfilling experience. Freedom would be encouraged, but license would not; and a reasonable amount of decorum and respect for both the equipment and the rights of others would be required. At the same time, and with every effort to avoid infringing upon their liberty to experiment, the youth would be monitored systematically to assess both their own progress toward self-discovery and the effectiveness of the Center's program in achieving its goals. Follow-up studies should be conducted to determine the effect of the program upon the youth's ultimate career choices.

While our study was directed to a particular segment of minority youth, it would seem likely that these experimental programs would be useful for all youth regardless of race or socio-economic background. Probably very few young people have enough exposure to various job alternatives at the time of life when they are trying to decide on their future careers. And there are probably few parents, white or Negro, who are able to keep abreast of job opportunities in our complex and rapidly changing society and thus to counsel their children as wisely as would be desirable.

Of course, even perfect methods of orienting youth to take the utmost advantage of their abilities and preferences will be of little use if appropriate jobs are not available to them when they leave school. Our sample of above-average Negro high school graduates suffered frequent unemployment as well as under-employment. Most of the positions they were able to obtain, whether full-time or part-time, temporary or "permanent," were of the menial types traditionally open to Negroes. The great majority of these jobs offered little or no experience which could be applied to ultimate career ambitions, and most held no opportunity for advancement. Only two young men in the sample reported that they had ever been promoted on the job.

This must have been a discouraging introduction indeed to the realities of the world of work. Considerable effort would seem warranted to assure that the aspirations of the coming generation of Negro youth not be blunted by experiences which confirm latent doubts that their abilities really are valued in the United States of the 1960's.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study could not have been undertaken without the support and assistance of a great many persons.

First in importance were the 46 young men who were the subjects for our study. They willingly and graciously submitted to lengthy interviews or replied with care to questionnaires sent to them by mail.

We are also grateful to the Board of Education of the District of Columbia, which provided the background data which made it possible to trace so many of the graduates to their present addresses. The Board of Education was also ably represented on a special advisory committee for the study by: Mr. John Koontz, Assistant Superintendent for Junior-Senior High Schools; Dr. Irene Hypps, Assistant Superintendent for Pupil Personnel Services; and Dr. Benjamin Hunton, Supervising Director for Junior-Senior High Schools.

Other members of the study's advisory panel were Mr. Knox Banner, Executive Director, National Capital Downtown Committee, Inc.; Mr. Victor Daly, Deputy Director, U. S. Employment Service for the District of Columbia; Miss Margaret Garrity, Labor Standards Advisor, U. S. Department of Labor; Mr. Fred Hetzel, Director, U. S. Employment Service for the District of Columbia; Mr. Gordon Kennedy, Jr., Management Consultant, Booz, Allen and Hamilton; Miss Evelyn Murray, Chief of Youth Services, Bureau of Employment Security, U. S. Department of Labor; and Mr. Richard Wells, formerly Director of Job Development, Washington Urban League. All of these persons gave generously of their time and knowledge, and we are very grateful to them for their valuable comments and assistance.

Our appreciation goes also to the following persons who were contacted individually: Dr. G. Franklin Edwards, Professor of Sociology, Howard University; Dr. Marcia Freedman, Director, Youth-Work Program Review, National Committee on Employment of Youth; Mrs. Beatrice Hill, Employment Service Advisor, Bureau of Employment Security, U. S. Department of Labor; Colonel Campbell Johnson, Assistant to the Director, Selective Service System; and Miss Iona Meredith of the Upjohn Institute for Employment Research.

Gratitude should also be expressed to the following who participated in the study as temporary staff of the Washington Center for Metropolitan Studies: the late Mrs. Constance Daniel, who assembled most of the initial data on the graduates, and Miss Evelyn Greene and Miss Joyce Shokes, who carried out most of the interviews.

Finally, a special note of appreciation is owed to Mrs. Kathryn Stone, Director of the Human Resources Program of the Washington Center for Metropolitan Studies, who first conceived the study and provided many helpful suggestions during its course.

The author, of course, takes full responsibility for this presentation of the findings and the conclusions drawn. ESG